

How is language learned?

In this unit you will learn how to

- ★ become a more successful language learner
- ★ prepare for an interview
- ★ use countable and uncountable nouns
- ★ understand gestures in Western culture



Around the topic

1 A quiz

Below is a quiz to help you find out how good a language learner you are. Read each question and choose an answer that is closest to your situation. The scoring method and explanations are at the end of this unit.

Are you a good language learner?

1. Do you know exactly why you are learning English?
 - a. Yes, I know.
 - b. I'm not very sure.
 - c. I don't know.
2. Do you know at what level your English is now?
 - a. Yes.
 - b. No.
3. When you learn something new, do you try to practise it?
 - a. Always.
 - b. Usually.
 - c. Sometimes.
 - d. Seldom.
 - e. Never.
4. Do you try to find out the rules when you are learning English?
 - a. Not really, I just try to understand the meaning.
 - b. Yes, I think it is very important to understand the rules.
 - c. There are so many rules that I find it impossible to learn them.
5. How do you try to remember new words?
 - a. I don't try.
 - b. I write them in my notebook and review them.
 - c. I memorize the words by reading them aloud many times.
6. Do you check your homework before you hand it in to the teacher?
 - a. Always.
 - b. Sometimes.
 - c. Occasionally.
 - d. Never.



7. Do you ever speak English with native speakers?
 - a. No, there are no native speakers around.
 - b. Yes, I always try to speak English when I meet foreigners.
 - c. I sometimes speak with them.
 - d. I'm afraid they won't understand me, so I seldom try.
8. What do you do when you feel depressed about your English?
 - a. I think about the situation and try to encourage myself.
 - b. I want to give up learning English.
 - c. I don't do anything.
9. How do you feel about learning English? (Please be honest!)
 - a. I hate it, but I have to learn it.
 - b. I like it most of the time, but sometimes I find it boring.
 - c. I love it all the time.
 - d. I have no feelings about it.
10. How do you feel about the culture in English-speaking countries?
 - a. I'm not interested in it at all.
 - b. I'm quite interested in it.
 - c. I'm very interested in it.
 - d. I'm not very interested in it, but I think I need to understand it if I want to learn English better.



2 Discussion

Have you ever had any difficulties in learning English? What did you do to overcome these difficulties? Fill in the table below and then share your experiences with your partner.

My difficulties	My solutions

3 Listening and speaking

A. Peter Martin is an experienced language teacher from America. He has been teaching English in China for some years. He has some good advice on how Chinese students can learn English better. Listen to a short talk given by Mr. Martin. As you listen, note down his advice below.



Advice 1

Advice 2

Advice 3

Advice 4

...



Do you agree with Mr. Martin's opinions? If you have different ideas, discuss them in pairs.

B. Many students find it difficult to improve their English listening skills. Do you have any good advice? Would you recommend the following activities?



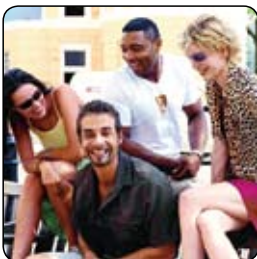
Listening to English radio programmes



Watching English films



Listening to English songs



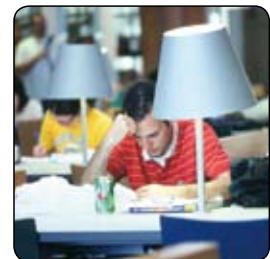
Trying to find opportunities to listen to foreigners



Doing listening practice tests



Improving pronunciation



Memorising a lot of words

Reading

1 Pre-reading tasks

You are going to read some extracts adapted from a book called *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner*. Below are the subtitles for the extracts. Before you read, work in groups and try to guess what these subtitles probably mean.

- You know yourself best.
- Play with the language.
- Everything depends on you.
- Find your own way.

2 Reading comprehension



How to be a more successful language learner?

Titles and subtitles provide a lot of information about texts. Effective readers always predict the content of text by reading the subtitles.



1.

You, the language learner, are the most important factor in the language learning process. Success or failure will, in the end, be determined by what you yourself contribute; for example, how hard you work, in what way you choose to learn and what goals you set for yourself. Many learners tend to blame teachers, circumstances, and the teaching materials for their lack of success. Actually, the most important reason for their lack of success can be found in themselves.

2.

Unless you can take charge of your own learning, you will probably not succeed in mastering the new language. You know

yourself best, so you should use your self-knowledge to guide your studies. It's all right if sometimes you disagree with some of your teacher's approaches and the suggestions made in the textbook. Of course, when necessary, you need to seek advice from others.

3.

People tend to learn language in different ways. Some are fond of analysing the language and need a rule for everything. Others are more intuitive; they prefer to gather examples and imitate them. Some need lots of repetition, while others hate repetition practice. In a classroom situation, the teacher cannot meet every student's needs. Therefore, you cannot always rely on your teacher to provide you with a way that is specially designed for you. You need to experiment and discover what works best for you.

4.

In order to master another language, you need to be personally involved. You need to play with the language to develop a feel for how it works. The language must become a part of you, rather than just a system of abstract rules. Learning a language is a little like learning to ride a bicycle. Only knowing how to ride a bicycle is not enough. You must get on the bike and play with it.

- A.** Read the extracts and match the paragraphs with the subtitles given in the Pre-reading section.
- B.** Read the extracts again and decide if the following statements are true or false. Mark "T" for a true statement and "F" for a false one.

1. Language learners should take the major responsibility for their own learning.
2. The best way for language learners is to teach themselves.
3. Language learners should trust themselves.
4. Language learners do not need to learn grammar rules.
5. In order to succeed in language learning, most learners need to work hard.
6. Language learners should try different ways of learning and find the best for themselves.
7. To play with the language means you needn't be very serious about language learning.



C. Answer the following questions.

1. What determines whether someone will succeed in language learning?
2. What does “take charge of your own learning” mean?
3. What do intuitive language learners often do?
4. How is learning a language similar to learning to ride a bicycle?



3 Vocabulary and structure



A. What do the following phrases and expressions mean in the extracts you have just read? Explain them in your own words.

1. lack of success (Para. 1) _____
2. take charge of (Para. 2) _____
3. seek advice from (Para. 2) _____
4. be fond of (Para. 3) _____
5. rely on (Para. 3) _____
6. provide you with (Para. 3) _____
7. play with the language (Para. 4) _____

B. Fill in the blanks in the following paragraph with a suitable word. For some blanks, more than one word is possible.

Many students complain about the (1) _____ of opportunities to practise their spoken English. But actually (2) _____ are everywhere. We should not always (3) _____ on others and hope the teachers will (4) _____ us with chances to practise. We should take (5) _____ of our own learning and try our best to (6) _____ opportunities. Some students are (7) _____ of speaking English wherever possible. By doing so, they (8) _____ with the language and develop a feel for how English works. In this way, the language (9) _____ a part of their life rather than just a boring (10) _____ of abstract rules.

C. Rewrite the following sentences after the model, using the expression “rather than”.

Model: *The language must become a part of you.*

The language is not just a system of abstract rules.

→ The language must become a part of you *rather than* just a system of abstract rules.

1. I think you'd call it a lecture.

I don't think you'd call it a talk.

2. Why not get some work experience first?

Don't go straight on to university.

3. It would be better to make a decision now.

You shouldn't leave it until later.

4. She likes dancing.

She doesn't like singing.

5. I'd prefer to read in the library.

I don't want to read at home.

4 Writing

Work in groups of three or four to discuss why you think learning English is important. Then write a short composition on the importance of learning English, using no less than 100 words.



Language in use

1 Test your grammar

A. Correct the mistakes in the following sentences. The first one has been done for you.

- Those are yellow star. Those are yellow stars.
- These are pretty dress. _____
- These are two sheeps. _____
- The child are in the house. _____
- The watches are on the table. _____

B. Rewrite the sentences in the plural form. The first one has been done for you.

- The mouse is behind the tree. The mice are behind the trees.
- The policeman is clever. _____
- This is a clean glass. _____
- The baby is near the window. _____
- That is a green leaf. _____

2 Grammar development: Countable and uncountable nouns

In English some words can be used as both countable and uncountable nouns, but their meanings are different. For example, when we use “language” as a countable noun, it refers to a particular type of language, such as Chinese, English and French. So we can say:

*English is a language spoken all over the world.
My friend Tom speaks three languages: English,
French and Chinese.*

When “language” is used as an uncountable noun, it refers to language in general. For example, we can say:

Language and thought are closely related to each other.

It is still a mystery how children learn language.

Language is the most important means of communication.



A. The word “language” is not used appropriately in the following sentences. Correct the mistakes. There may be more than one way to correct them.

1. Most Chinese students are required to learn foreign language.
2. Please do not use dirty words. They are bad languages.
3. English is official language in India.
4. Written languages are usually more formal than spoken languages.
5. There is no such thing as backward language.
6. It is important for us to speak and write in a plain language.
7. Many people in the world are learning Chinese as foreign language.
8. Sometimes a language is not as powerful as we wish it to be.



Some words such as *water, tea, coffee, beer* are usually used as uncountable nouns. But sometimes they are used as countable nouns. For example, in restaurants you often hear people say *two coffees, three teas*, etc. Can you guess what these expressions mean? In Chinese what do we say to express these meanings?

B. Fill in the blanks in the following sentences with *coffee* or *coffees*. Think about the meaning of each sentence.

1. Would you like some _____? —Yes, please!
2. Can I help you? —Two _____, please!
3. When they arrived at a small town, they stopped for a cup of _____.
4. That’s four _____ and two pieces of apple pie, right? —Yes, sir.
5. Lisa felt refreshed as she made herself some _____ and settled down to work.
6. One of the most popular drinks in America is _____.
7. Do you like your _____ black or white? —White, please!
8. After dinner the guests chatted over _____ for a while.



Grammar tips

可数与不可数是英语名词的最基本特征。一般说来，个体名词是可数名词；物质名词、抽象名词和专有名词是不可数名词；集体名词则有的可数，有的不可数。可数名词与不可数名词在一定条件下可以相互转化。

(1) 物质名词一般是不可数的，但用来表示具体、个别事物，或表示各种不同品种时，通常是可数的，如 *different coffees, various soaps*。

(2) 抽象名词一般是不可数的，但当它前后有修饰语表示“某一种”或“某一方面”的抽象概念时，其前可加 *a/an*。例如：*A good map would be a help.*

3

Vocabulary building: Ways of word formation

- A.** When we learn English words, it is useful to be aware of the different forms of a word; for example, the noun form, the verb form and the adjective form. Complete the following word formation table. Some of the words are from the text.

Verb	Noun	Adjective
succeed	success	successful
fail		
determine		
	contribution	
learn		
tend		
		different
analyse		
	practice	
discover		
	knowledge	
		important

- B.** Complete each of the following sentences with a word from the table above. Change the form where necessary.

- If you want to do research work, you should be familiar with data _____.
- There is an English saying, "A little _____ is a dangerous thing."
- Mandela was awarded the Nobel Prize for his _____ to world peace.
- Many students _____ to learn English words by memorizing a word list.
- Do you really believe that _____ makes perfect? I doubt it.
- You should not blame others for your _____ in life or work.
- I can't tell the _____ between the twins. They're the same to me.
- My grandfather is always saying to himself, "One is never too old to _____."
- A good start is half _____.
- _____ is the key to success.
- Many great _____ were made by chance.
- Later we learnt that there was a very _____ person on board.

Project

The best way to learn English



There are lots of facts you can find which help to persuade you that learning English is a good idea—400 million first language speakers, 700 million second or foreign language speakers, over a billion people learning it right now. And over 80% of the information stored in the world's computers is in English, more than half of the world's scientific journals are in English, it's the main language on the Internet, and so on. But the questions are: How can we learn English better? What is the best way to learn English? The first answer is: Nobody knows. And the second answer is: Because nobody knows the best way to learn English, there isn't one. It's an old fantasy for learners and teachers—to find the one perfect key. Now you may try it. Try to find out what is the best way to learn English by interviewing people who have studied English. You may do the interview project along the following steps:

Step 1

Work in groups of four. Design at least five questions for the interview. The topic should be around what is the best way to learn English.

Step 2

Look for suitable interviewees. The interviewees should be able to speak English and have some experience in learning English. They can be your teachers, your schoolmates or some foreigners you come across in the street.

Step 3

When you do the interview, write down the answers you get from the interviewees.

Step 4

Collect the results within groups and prepare a presentation for the class.

Step 5

Each group presents the results and gives a report to the whole class. Group members may also talk about what they have learned from this interview project.



Extension

How to be a better reader



Take an active part. First and foremost, reading is learnt rather than taught, and only the learners can do the learning. So the students' first responsibility is to be active and take charge of what they do. It is very important for you to make plans about what, when and how to read.

Choose the right materials. Once a student has made a reading plan, he must next decide what materials to read. It is not true that students should read any material that comes to hand. It is so easy to waste time on books or articles that do not help. To decide if some materials are suitable, students should skim them first. Students are advised to select those materials that are neither too easy nor too difficult, and preferably those with interesting topics.

Monitor comprehension. Like teachers, students need to understand how texts work and what we do when we read. Students must be able to monitor their own comprehension. For instance, they should be able to recognise that they do not understand some parts of the text, find out why and adopt a strategy to improve matters. This ability to think about what is going on in the mind is recognised as a key factor in

people's capacity to develop as efficient readers.

Learn text talk. A good reader carries on a dialogue with the text. Students have to learn how to do this. An effective way to learn this is to talk about texts in class. The teacher can plan activities for this purpose, and model the text talk, but it is the students who have to make the most of the opportunities by joining in.

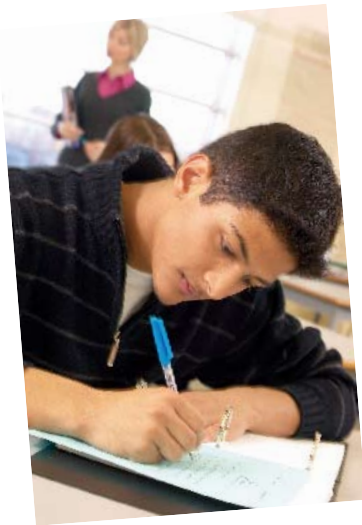
Take risks. Learning to read involves taking the risk of making mistakes. Students won't learn much if they don't do this. The sooner students realise that a mistake is an opportunity to learn, the better. Similarly, they need to be prepared to admit when they do not understand. Of course, they will only do this if the classroom atmosphere encourages it.

Learn not to cheat oneself. Learning to read is learning to give oneself an enormous advantage in life. It may lead to better jobs; it certainly leads to personal development, interest and enjoyment. Students who don't want to learn to read can easily cheat on many of the activities in their textbooks. But they are only cheating themselves. Nobody else will suffer.

Notes:

skim: v. to read something quickly to find the main facts or ideas in it 浏览 (快速阅读的一种方式)

learn text talk: to learn to talk with the text 学会与课文对话



1 Discussion

When teachers are asked to give advice on reading, most of them will say you should read more, read faster and try to guess the unknown words. But are there any other ways to help students become better readers? This passage provides some suggestions given by reading researchers. Read the passage and decide whether you agree with the suggestions and whether you will be able to follow them.

2 Vocabulary check

Fill in the blanks with the words below. Change the form where necessary.

responsibility

efficient

skim

effective

preferably

risk

adopt

enormous

strategy

suffer



1. The _____ use of colour can make a small room look much bigger.
2. Anne still _____ a lot of pain in her leg.
3. The courts were asked to _____ a more flexible approach to young offenders.
4. Kelly's promotion means more money and more _____.
5. We're looking for well-qualified young people, _____ with good computer skills.
6. We need a new _____ for increasing our sales in Europe.
7. People continue to smoke, despite knowing the _____ of heart disease or cancer.
8. My new computer is much faster and more _____ than the old one was.
9. She didn't have much time so she just _____ through the report before the meeting.
10. He has a(n) _____ amount of work to finish before Friday.

Culture tips

Gestures

Gestures are useful body language. Many gestures are culture-specific, that is, the same gesture may have different meanings in different cultures. The gestures on the right can be understood by most speakers of English.



(1)



(2)



(3)

A. Work in pairs and discuss the meaning of these gestures.

B. Draw some other gestures that are often used by Chinese people.



(4)



(5)



(6)



Learning to learn

Attitude plays a very important role in learning English. What attitude should you hold towards learning English? Why do you choose English as your major? Consider the following statements and then discuss your ideas with other students.

I'm here because:

1. I want to really understand English grammar.
2. I want/need to get my English up to date.
3. I don't know enough words.
4. I've got an important English exam in two months' time.
5. I need better English for my job.
6. I want to speak *proper* English.
7. I can't understand English on the radio.
8. I need to write business letters.
9. I want to be able to read English better.
10. I want to have a holiday with a difference.
11. I just need to get away.
12. English is not my first choice, but I have to take this major and get a college diploma.

...



Scoring method and explanations for the quiz.

1. a. 4 points b. 2 points c. 0 point
2. a. 2 points b. 0 point
3. a. 5 points b. 4 points c. 3 points d. 2 points e. 0 point
4. a. 2 points b. 3 points c. 1 point
5. a. 0 point b. 3 points c. 1 point
6. a. 3 points b. 2 points c. 1 point d. 0 point
7. a. 0 point b. 4 points c. 2 points d. 1 point
8. a. 4 points b. 0 point c. 1 point
9. a. 1 point b. 3 points c. 4 points d. 1 point
10. a. 0 point b. 2 points c. 3 points d. 1 point

25-35:

Congratulations! You already meet most of the requirements for learning a foreign language well. You understand the importance of practice, of checking, and of meeting English speakers. You probably like English, and are interested in language in general.

10-24:

You are certainly well on the way to becoming a good language learner. It may be necessary for you to “play to your strong points”—for example, you need to be realistic about your goals, and know exactly what you want, and the best way to get it. Don’t forget that, even if you are not “in love” with English, there are a lot of good habits which can help you in your studies.

Below 10:

Don’t worry! You may be studying English for many different reasons, and your way of learning a foreign language may need a change. But keep in mind that, if you develop some useful habits like always checking your work, practising as much as possible, and doing everything to revise new vocabulary, you are sure to make progress.